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EDITORIAL

The eighth annual meeting of the National Council will be memorable. Postponed from last November on account of the epidemic, it will be held in conjunction with the **Construction or Reconstruction** Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association. Those who attend will therefore have the opportunity of looking in on some of the sessions of America's most influential organization of educators. Contact with practical administrators is a good thing for the specialist in more ways than one. The armistice has been signed. The air is full of vague speculations and prophecies concerning the social changes upon which we are supposed to be entering. The period of "reconstruction" is here.

Are the functions and opportunities of the English teacher to suffer radical and permanent change? If so, how and in what directions? Are these changes inevitable, inherent in the conditions brought about by the world-struggle, or may the English teacher himself have something to say about them? Are our opportunities to be restricted? Before the war there were rumblings and mutterings indicative of possible thunder storms, with, it may be, destructive winds. Has the air been cleared, or may we expect renewed demands that we look to ourselves, inquiring with all diligence whether we are not, to some extent at least, mere cumberers of the ground?

A nation-wide movement for Americanization is being launched. Will English teachers accept the responsibility of perfecting methods of instructing the illiterate and the foreign in the use of our language and in the social ideals which we cherish? Vocational training is sure to receive steadily increasing emphasis. Shall it tend to the sordidly materialistic, or shall the worker learn to interpret the intellectual elements in his handiwork and see the reflection of his own happily cherished purposes in the product? Shall we build up a machine to rival in efficiency the German industrial system, or shall we have a true industrial democracy, in which the opportu-

nity to share in every legitimate sense of the word shall be guaranteed to everyone? The English teacher is and ought to be deeply concerned in that question, both theoretically and practically, for the task of building our national ideals is partly in his hands. The center of equilibrium in politics is at present dizzyingly unstable abroad and may soon become so here. What type of political control will best serve our social needs in the coming decades? Shall we continue in the direction of centralization and strong national government? What part is the new Labor party to play? What policies should be espoused by the old parties? If English is something more than punctuation and choice of words, the teacher of English will have to face such practical questions in more than a merely personal way. Finally there is the problem of recreation. Ideally all our people should have leisure and know what to do to enjoy it. It appears that the opportunity for leisure will arrive in advance of the capacity for wise use of it. Books have been commonly regarded as particularly fitted for the leisure hour. Do our present plans provide adequately for making books sufficiently accessible, both physically and mentally, to the masses? If not, what do we propose to do about it?

From such questions not a few would escape by going backward, by recovering, as they fondly hope, our ancient love of the "classics" and what not. But however much the pendulum may swing, it never really moves back. At the center we progress. Unless all signs fail, English is to be the chief humanizing agency in the schools of the future, the chief means by which the best that has been thought and said in the world shall be assimilated by our generation. That is why a convention of English teachers at this time is so important. That is why, as we sincerely believe, the eighth annual meeting of the National Council will be memorable.

As the *Journal* goes to press there comes the sad news of the death of Mr. Newman Miller, the Director of the University of Chicago Press, to whose wise guidance and hearty sympathy the success of the magazine has, from the beginning, been largely due. Mr. Miller had a wide experience in the publishing of magazines and was able to foresee far in advance

the difficulties that would arise. His efficient service to the University of Chicago and to the world through his management of the Press is known to all. The dread influenza has taken him from us, and we shall miss him.

Theodore Clarence Mitchill, a founder and one of the first directors of the National Council of Teachers of English, died suddenly of apoplexy on December 27, 1918, at his home in New York City. Theodore Clarence Mitchill had been a teacher ever since his graduation at Columbia in 1886, at first in private schools and after 1899 in the public schools of New York City. He was successively a teacher of English in the DeWitt Clinton High School, head of the department of English in the Boys' High School, and since 1910 principal of the Jamaica High School. In addition to these positions, he was for a number of years principal of the New York Evening High School for Men and an instructor in English in the Extension Department of Columbia. He was for one summer an instructor in English in the summer school of Cornell University. He had been for a number of years a member of the Committee on College Entrance Requirements in English. He was the first president of the New York City Association of Teachers of English and had been president of the New York State English Teachers. He was the joint author with George Rice Carpenter of *Exposition in Class Room Practice*, and last year he edited for school use London's *Call of the Wild*.

Mr. Mitchill was born in New York City in 1866, was educated at Trinity School and Columbia University, and held the degrees of A.B. and A.M. from his Alma Mater. He was unmarried. His mother and a brother and sister survive him.

A virile and energetic personality, Mr. Mitchill did much to make the teaching of English a vital and important discipline. To take a course with him meant coming into contact with a man who believed with his whole soul in thoroughness and exactness. His precept and example have meant much in English teaching.

EDWIN FAIRLEY